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**WDC Tenant Scrutiny Panel - New Tenant Visit Scrutiny exercise 2016/17**

**Report for Housing Improvement Board.**

This is the third scrutiny exercise carried out by the Scrutiny Panel, which was set up in 2014 to act as a ‘critical friend’ and take a tenant’s view of housing services performance.

The Panel reviewed the Council’s 2015/16 performance and identified that the number of new tenant visits being carried out within the 21 day target was steadily decreasing. The Panel had recognised the importance of new tenant visits in improving tenancy sustainment and so were concerned by this decrease. As one of the Service Standards that had been identified as one of the most important to tenants and regularly reported through the Housing News performance insert, it was chosen to be scrutinized.

**Scrutiny Process**

* The Scrutiny Panel carried out background research on tenancy sustainment looking at the CIH Good Practice (NT23);
* Sample paperwork of application process and sign-up process provided;
* Briefing note on New tenant visits ( NT1) presented by Myra Feeney;
* Panel members shadowed Housing Officers carrying out new tenant visits;
* Follow up information received from Housing Officers confirming post visit actions; and
* Reviewed and assess information gathered to create recommendations

**Summary of evidence collected and recommendations to improve effectiveness of New Tenant Visits**

* Panel noted that good information was provided at the sign-up.
* The New Tenant Briefing that the Panel were given by Myra Feeney (NT1) and the checklist for completing at the sign-up (NT 4) don’t tally. The Briefing outlines all the preventative action they are looking to do but the checklist is more basic and if staff stick to the checklist they won’t cover items mentioned in the Briefing. The Staff Guidance Note (NT 2) also gives very little explanation to staff of why they do the new tenant visit. It only states *’The New Tenant Visit is an opportunity to identify issues or concerns*’ so unless it is clearer what the purpose of the visit is to staff then the outcomes will vary.

***Recommendation 1a –*** New tenant visit guidance note for staff should be rewritten to fully explain the purpose of the new tenant visit. The importance of checking and completing the necessary information on the checklist before the visit is carried should be stated in the Guidance so that it can be discussed properly at the visit.

***Recommendation 1b -*** TheStaff Guidance needs to be clearer about what they are trying to achieve and would recommend that much of the CIH Guidance is used.

***Recommendation 2a -*** TheNew tenant visit checklist should be rewritten to reflect the information and issues that Housing Operations want staff to record to ensure the visit can identify issues and concerns and have more space for the comments/issues to be recorded.

***Recommendation 2b -*** The order of the New Tenant Visit checklist should cover the main issues concerning the new tenant first and then cover the rent and housing benefit information.

* On one visit the new tenant was concerned that he only had one set of keys and had been told by a neighbour that the previous tenant still had a set but was told he would need to pay for the locks to be changed, whereas when discussing outcomes of the visits, the Team Leader advised he would have arranged for the locks to be changed.

The relet standard (NT12) states ‘key**s**/fob**s** will be issued for front and rear doors’, so unclear as to what he should have been given.

***Recommendation 3*** *-*New tenant visit guidance note for staff should include clearer guidance to staff on what they can do to assist new tenants settle in. Need to ensure there is a consistent service and no tenants are being disadvantaged or out of pocket by the advice they get at the NT Visit.

* On one visit, the follow up wasn’t specified. ‘I’ll take that back and let you know’ and there was no record if followed through.

***Recommendation 4*** –Panel suggest that a ‘New tenant agreed actions’ sheet be created to capture any follow-up action or information - would also need to specify a timescale and a copy can be given to the new tenant.

* 3 week target for completing new tenant visit considered too soon for issues and concerns to arise as tenants often still in the throws of moving or settling in.

***Recommendation 5*** - 3 week target for completing new tenant visit should be reconsidered to allow more time for issues or concerns to be identified and ensure the visit is as effective as possible.

* On reviewing what gets recorded on the new tenant database it was seen as a basic tool to measure how many visits get done within the 3 week timescale. Staff had to record follow up visits and any work relating to the new tenant visit on a separate work database. So the database couldn’t demonstrate the effectiveness of the visit so seemed to be a very limited performance tool.

***Recommendation 6*** - New tenant database should be amended to include outcomes from the visit and as a way of evaluating the effectiveness (or otherwise ) of visits.

**Thanks and appreciation**

The Scrutiny Panel are grateful for the co-operation of Myra Feeney and Housing Operations staff in providing information and assistance in completing this scrutiny exercise. With particular thanks to the Housing Officers who took Panel members out on new tenant visits.

The Scrutiny Panel members involved in this project were:

Rita Howard Paul Moore

Ian Blair Gary McBain

The Panel were supported by Jane Mack, Tenant Participation Officer and Kathryn Kelly, Strategic Housing Officer.

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| **Doc ref** | **Description** |
| NT1 | New Tenant Visits Briefing for Scrutiny Panel Nov 16 |
| NT2 | New Tenant Visit Guidance Note |
| NT3 | New Tenant Checklist - Signup |
| NT4 | New Tenant Visit Checklist |
| NT5 | New Tenant Visit Form |
| NT6 | WDC Scrutiny Panel NT Visit Assessment Sheet |
| NT7 | Performance info collected for tenancy sustainment - email from Stefan |
| NT8 | Home Safety Visit Info |
| NT9 | Charter Indicator 20 |
| NT10 | Charter Indicator 21 |
| NT11 | New Tenant info Sheet |
| NT12 | Relet Standard |
| NT13 | Relet Standard Agreement |
| NT14 | Rent and HB Info |
| NT15 | Council Tax Form |
| NT16 | Home Content Insurance |
| NT17 | SSE details |
| NT18 | Fire Safety Notice |
| NT19 | Useful info for setting up home |
| NT20 | Welfare Rights Info |
| NT21 | Exit Survey |
| NT22 | CIH Tenancy Sustainment Briefings (K Kelly) |
| NT23 | Tenancy Sustainment Performance Data |
| NT24 | Scrutiny Panel draft final report |
| NT25 | Housing Officer feedback info following NTVs |
| NT26 | Lock change confirmation 48/3 Halkett cres |
|  | **Panel Logo.JPG** |